

“Draw the Circle Wide” refers to the popular folk hymn by the same title (Voices Together, #802) that emphasizes inclusivity, community and God’s love: *“Draw the circle. Draw the circle wide. No one stands alone; we’ll stand side by side.”*

10 Embodied Ways to Draw the Circle Wide

1. Visit outside your comfort circle.

Worship at a congregation different from your own – racially, culturally, politically or theologically. Proximity changes perspective.

2. Listen to stories of those directly impacted.

Create welcoming listening spaces, prioritizing safety ahead of visibility.

Some tips:

- Never pressure marginalized members to share. Obtain clear consent, establish confidentiality (no photos, recordings, or livestreams), and consider anonymous or written testimonies instead of public storytelling.
- Use trained, trauma-informed facilitators and ensure pastoral follow-up care.
- Whenever possible, shift the burden of education away from those most at risk by using published resources or speakers from MC USA or inviting local speakers who have chosen public advocacy.

Widening the circle means sharing risk responsibly – not increasing it for those already vulnerable.

3. Map your own community’s “circles.”

Replicate the visual exercise from this blog:

- Where have incidents of violence or injustice occurred in your city?
- Where are your churches located?
- Where do members live?
- Ask: What pain exists just outside our normal routes?

4. Build relationships with immigrant communities.

Don’t wait for a crisis. Partner with immigrant-led churches or organizations. Commit to sustained, in-person solidarity. Offer your building space, childcare support, language tutoring or transportation accompaniment to legal appointments. Pool funds for emergency rent, legal fees or trauma counseling.

5. Develop a congregational response plan.

Just as we would call Mennonite Disaster Service after a wildfire, create a plan for responding to “theological and social disasters”:

- Who do we contact?
- Who speaks publicly?
- How do we protect vulnerable members?

Preparation prevents paralysis.

6. Practice bystander and de-escalation training.

Equip members to respond safely to harassment or intimidation in public spaces. See MC USA’s [“Immigration and Resources Advocacy” web page](#). Community groups also may offer training in accompaniment, de-escalation and nonviolent intervention.

7. Revisit “the talk” in faith formation.

In youth groups, adult education and preaching, acknowledge real fears people carry when interacting with law enforcement. Create space for lament and theological reflection about justice, safety and belonging.

8. Support pastors in affected regions.

Acknowledging the long-term trauma facing Twin Cities pastors, congregations outside Minnesota can:

- Send financial gifts designated for pastoral care.
- Offer sabbath grants.
- Schedule pulpit exchanges.

Circle-widening includes sustaining those on the front lines.

9. Examine where national identity shapes theology.

Have honest congregational conversations about what it means to follow Jesus before flag or political party. Study passages about neighbor-love and enemy-love. Ask: Where are we too rooted in red, white and blue to embody the gospel fully?

10. Stand side by side — publicly and prayerfully.

When members of your community are targeted — whether immigrants, Black neighbors or LGBTQ Christians — show up physically:

- Attend or host prayer vigils.
- Write pastoral letters.
- Offer sanctuary spaces.
- Invite those most impacted to shape worship itself — Ask them to help plan prayers, select music, write litanies, preach or name what faithful solidarity looks like in that moment. Centering their theological voice ensures worship reflects lived reality, not just institutional response.